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Chair

Mr. James Bezan

Standing Committee on National Defence

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP)): I hereby call meeting number 53 of the Standing Committee on National Defence to order. We're here to continue our study on NATO's strategic concept and Canada's role in international defence cooperation.

Before we start, Mr. McKay, we have three motions that you've put before the committee. Do you wish to have them considered today?

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): I put three motions before the committee based on the report of the Auditor General's chapter 3.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Before you start, as you see on the agenda, there's an opportunity for committee business at the end.

Hon. John McKay: Yes, I just want to enumerate them and then propose a method of handling them.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): A point of order. Are we going to discuss this now or later?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): The question is, before we start, whether you wish to have them dealt with today. If you do, we'll deal with them at the end of the meeting under the item called "Committee Business".

Hon. John McKay: No, I was going to propose that we deal with them on Tuesday before the subcommittee. I think the Auditor General's reports are important responses.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): That would be fine.

Hon. John McKay: I hope that's acceptable to the chair and to the committee.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): That's fine. You can have them considered any day, anytime you wish. Notice of motion has been given, so those are before the committee.

Hon. John McKay: Is Tuesday a subcommittee day, by the way, Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): On Tuesday, everything is a subcommittee.

Hon. John McKay: Okay, so that's a good place to deal with it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Is everybody clear on that?

Thank you, Mr. McKay.

Welcome to our guests, retired ambassador Peggy Mason and Professor Paul Meyer. Each of you has approximately 10 minutes to make your initial submission, and then we'll have questions from our committee members in the usual fashion, if that's okay.

Professor Mason, do you wish to start first?

Ms. Peggy Mason (As an Individual): Thank you very much.

Good afternoon.

[*Translation*]

First of all, I must apologize. It was impossible for me to send my text in advance so that it could be translated and distributed. But I have given copies to the clerk in order to facilitate the simultaneous interpretation.

[*English*]

I know it's not optimal, and I apologize, but I hope the interpreters will be able to follow my text. The text will be available after, but I don't have a translated text, and it cannot be circulated at this point.

Thank you very much. I'm very pleased to be here.

My text is entitled, "Is it time to take a hard look at NATO's second pillar: crisis management?" That's a pillar in terms of the strategic concept of core tasks.

In a nutshell, my thesis today is that NATO is not the UN and should not be wasting valuable time, effort, and resources trying to duplicate the UN role in crisis management. Instead, NATO members should be looking hard at how they can best support the hard end, the military role of the UN in crisis management, through re-engaging with boots on the ground, making advanced operational capabilities more consistently available to the UN, and of course leading stabilization efforts mandated by the UN where appropriate.

My second point is that had Canada and other NATO countries stayed more fully engaged in UN blue helmet peacekeeping—some NATO countries did, but not most—the international approach to stabilizing Afghanistan, for example, might have been quite different.

Let us briefly recall the wording in Strategic Concept 2010 and in the Chicago Summit declaration on NATO's crisis management role.

Basically what NATO is saying is that to manage conflicts, and certainly to prevent them or to deal with the aftermath, the military role is not enough. This is what led NATO to adopt the comprehensive approach and bring the full range of political, diplomatic, police, development, and other tools to bear in resolving conflicts. But for NATO to do this, in my humble submission, and I'm talking as someone who has spent the better part of the last 10 years working with NATO, is to have the tail wagging the dog. That's because NATO is, first and foremost, a military organization, although of course it has an important political oversight structure. There will be lots of arguments about whether it's primarily military or primarily political. I would say that the value added to peace support operations and stabilization operations is very much the military component. I would argue, then, that the lead cannot be military when the solutions are pre-eminently political, albeit often with an extremely important military support component.

To be blunt, 28 nations are not 193 nations. The North Atlantic Council is not the UN Security Council, even if some members overlap. The NATO International Military Staff is not the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The NATO political advisers are not the UN Department of Political Affairs.

NATO's value added is its military capability, as so many witnesses before me have pointed out.

● (1535)

Any effort, however well intentioned, to duplicate the UN's pre-eminent role in international peace and security writ large, including in particular crisis prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict peace building, is highly problematic, especially when it drains the most professional military resources away from UN-led operations.

Perhaps this is why previous speakers, such as Paul Chapin, and in the paper that he co-authored with David Bercuson, have talked about how this enhanced crisis management role for NATO was at the edge of the comfort zone—these are Paul Chapin's words—for many in Europe, even before the financial crisis hit.

The very difficult saga of NATO in Afghanistan, I would suggest, has not quieted their fears.

To go back for a moment, I might note that when Jill Sinclair, the assistant deputy minister, policy, from the Department of National Defence was here testifying, she summarized NATO's crisis management operations and missions as Afghanistan, Libya, Kosovo, counterterrorism in the Mediterranean, the NATO training mission in Iraq, and then she also talked about civilian emergency planning, so that's where NATO has done this, and now of course, with the new strategic concept, or the summit declaration out of Chicago, there is an even further emphasis on the aspect of preventing conflict.

As I said, some speakers before me have talked about how this role is at the edge of the comfort zone for many in Europe.

I want to talk a little about UN-led peace operations. The great tragedy for Canada is that having been such a pre-eminent UN peacekeeper for so long, our disengagement from UN blue helmet operations post-UNPROFOR, the protection force in the former Yugoslavia in the early nineties, has left us institutionally almost completely unaware of the transformation in planning, conduct, and management of UN-led operations since then. Fundamental review has been carried out, and key lessons identified or re-identified.

New command and control structures and sophisticated integrated planning mechanisms and field support structures for missions have been put in place. Sadly, the message has not got through to the military structures of many NATO members, removed as they are from this UN activity. That, of course, means all that hard military expertise is removed from this UN activity.

I would like to recall the words of James Appathurai speaking from NATO about NATO's—he called it NATO's pre-eminent role regarding UN peace operations. He said, and I'm quoting from his testimony to you:

> NATO is uniquely capable as an organization to generate, deploy, command, and sustain large numbers of forces in multinational operations. No other organization can do this....
>
> Today NATO has over 150,000 troops...in a variety of operations.

Compare this to the fact that the UN currently has over 82,000 military forces engaged in some 16 peace operations, as well as 3,000 military observers, 14,000 police, and 13,000 civilians.

The point I want to make is that the majority of these blue helmet missions are not light operations. They are mandated under chapter 7 of the UN charter, the same as the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan. To be blunt again, if the UN were relying mainly on NATO-led missions, huge swaths of the globe would be abandoned.

The political dimensions of peace operations are what I want to focus on. The central lesson of the Brahimi report, which was this big report reviewing hard lessons on failed UN peacekeeping in particular—and I would argue that this applies also when we're talking about what NATO calls crisis response operations, or conflict management operations—is that peacekeeping cannot substitute for an effective political process. If we are to match politics to peacekeeping, the peacekeeping operation must be in support of a credible peace process, if not ideally a peace agreement to be implemented.

● (1540)

Credibility implies both internal support and legitimacy with respect to the parties to the conflict. It also implies broad external backing in the form of a common political or strategic framework. I would suggest that the problems inherent in many of the current UN-led blue helmet operations, but also, and this is what is so relevant for us here today, for UN-mandated, but not UN-led...in other words, NATO-led peace operations. The problems with those missions reflect the failure of the international community, certainly the UN Security Council, to heed the lesson that military activity has to be in support of a credible political framework and peace process.

I would suggest, for example, that Haiti exemplifies an incomplete peace process—elections do not include its largest political party. A range of rebel groups remain outside the agreements negotiated in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Afghanistan, where NATO has been leading the stabilization force, the Security Assistance Force, the international community developed a common framework for its engagement there with selected internal actors, without due attention to a process that might ensure broad political inclusion. Increasingly, UN peace operations have, as one of their core functions, extension of state authority, which is essentially what it ended up being in ISAF in Afghanistan.

How can the UN peacekeeping mission operate in the context of a variety of non-state actors opposing it, especially where some or all of them have external backing, as MONUC faces in the Democratic Republic of Congo? I would say that's a question that NATO could ask itself in Afghanistan. How far can the UN mission operate contrary to the will of the host government, as UNAMID must in Darfur? How successful could ISAF be in Afghanistan within a political framework where the international community, intentionally or not, in effect, took sides in a civil war?

Of course, there will always be spoilers who will remain outside the agreement, but the starting point must be to develop as inclusive a political framework as possible so that spoilers can be effectively isolated.

● (1545)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Ms. Mason, we've reached your 10-minute mark.

Ms. Peggy Mason: I wonder if I could summarize, then.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Sure, if that's acceptable.

Some hon. members: Yes.

Ms. Peggy Mason: I do apologize. I slowed down my reading for the interpreters and I'm well behind.

The next point I want to talk about, and I invite questions on this, is that one of the biggest misunderstandings of current UN peace operations relates to the use of force. I go back to Paul Chapin talking about the UN doing the easy peacekeeping. In fact, they're operating in very dangerous environments, with very robust rules of engagement. My point here, really, is that this leads to the question, what are the limits of the use of force when you're not in a war, when you're trying to stabilize the situation? My argument would be that a dialogue on the limits of the use of force in the context of a broader discussion on the fundamental requirement for a credible peace process might help demonstrate that robust force, no matter how essential, still does not obviate the necessity for political solutions to political problems.

Essentially, what I'm saying is that, ironically, had NATO countries stayed more engaged in UN peace operations, they would have perhaps had a better understanding that it's not just robust military force that will see you through if it's not in support of a credible political framework. Afghanistan demonstrates that over and over again. I think there needs to be a very robust dialogue between NATO members and the UN on this issue. The UN can study UN-led missions, but they can't study NATO-led missions without being sponsored by a NATO country. I think this would be a very important thing to do.

The next point I have—and perhaps you'll ask me some questions on this. The other big misperception about UN-led missions—and this is the area I'm working in with NATO—is the view that somehow there's a big problem about command and control in UN missions. In fact, in UN missions, unlike in NATO missions, there isn't a division between political control and military control. UN command and control is decentralized to the operational level under civilian command, the civilian head of the UN mission. That, in my view, is an essential element of a successful crisis management or peacekeeping operation. Having a divided command between a UN mission doing the political stuff on the one hand, as in Afghanistan, and a military mission answering to other authorities on the other is a recipe for ineffective command.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you very much, Ms. Mason. We all have a copy of your resumé and c.v. We're aware of your vast experience, and we would appreciate the benefit of the paper itself. Would you leave a copy with us? We can't distribute it until we translate it, but I just spoke with the clerk and he will see that it is translated so that every member of the committee can have it for our consideration and as part of our deliberations.

Normally, when we have two guests, we have both people speak and then we start our questioning afterwards. If that's acceptable, Professor Meyer, would you like to go next?

Professor Meyer is a senior fellow of the Simons Foundation. Again, we have your resumé, sir, so thank you for that, and we'd be happy to hear from you for 10 minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Meyer (Senior Fellow, The Simons Foundation): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, good afternoon.

First, may I thank you for giving me this opportunity to attend your meeting to discuss this important matter as part of your study.

[*English*]

Many years ago I served with the Canadian delegation at NATO during the end of the Cold War, and I have a deep appreciation for the capacity of the alliance to adapt to new circumstances while maintaining a crucial traditional solidarity among its members.

At the same time, it is incumbent on alliance members, including Canada, to regularly review NATO activity and determine if it still offers the best value for money. The strategic concept set out some broad directions in specifying collective defence crisis management and cooperative security as the core tasks of the alliance.

While I agree with all these, I would like to see greater emphasis placed on the alliance's consultative role and its potential for conflict prevention. Collective defence remains the foundation of NATO, but in recent years this no longer entails defending ally territory from attack, as much as it does collaboration in defending alliance interests wherever they are threatened.

NATO's unique strength is its integrated civilian-military structures and associated ability to conduct complex major joint operations. This unrivalled capacity to project and sustain forces and to manage effectively a multinational mission is what has made NATO the go-to organization for conducting combat operations on behalf of the United Nations and other groupings of states. This has been the case in situations from the Balkans to Afghanistan, and most recently in Libya. Frankly, the alliance should expect similar requirements and requests in the future.

Canada, for its part, should continue to contribute to maintaining this collective capability and to ensuring that member states contribute appropriately. A smart defence approach should entail some pooling of resources and a development of niche capabilities, rather than trying to have each member possess a full-spectrum capacity.

That is why Canada's decision to withdraw from the AWACS program of NATO sends, I believe, an unfortunate signal, as this was an example of a common NATO program providing a very specialized capability that would have been prohibitively expensive for most of its members to acquire on a purely national basis. The ongoing presence of Canadian Air Force personnel on European soil as part of the integrated aircrews that man the NATO AWACS planes I think also served an important symbolic and political role as a tangible presence of Canadian personnel on European soil, working side by side, literally, with comrades-in-arms from other NATO states.

Building expeditionary capabilities for the Canadian Forces is one way to contribute to NATO's ability to project force, but so is supporting common programs or assisting with specialized capabilities that may be beyond the reach of other allies or partners.

I mentioned earlier that I believe NATO should spend as much time on conflict prevention as it does on crisis management. I think this relates to the consultative role of the alliance—a function that was at the core of Canada's championing of article 2 of the Washington Treaty at its inauguration—and the importance of maintaining NATO as a focus for political-military consultations on the security challenges of the day.

Canada, alongside other non-EU allies such as Norway and Turkey, has to be especially assertive to sustain this crucial role for the alliance because the current tendency is for the EU, on one hand, and the United States, on the other, as the big boys, to go off and do their own internal consultations at our expense. If Canada's wish to see NATO as a political alliance as much as a military one is to be more than just a rhetorical goal, it will require re-energizing the alliance's consultative mechanisms and developing headquarters and delegation efforts to this end.

● (1550)

When I was serving at NATO, the alliance's political committee, for example, had regular consultations on arms control and disarmament issues and regional security concerns. My impression is that there has been a steady decline in this type of collective assessment and strategizing, which is vital if the alliance is to stay ahead of the curve and engage in conflict prevention programs and not only in crisis management sessions. These political consultations should be essential if the alliance is to be an active contributor to international security through diplomacy and disarmament, and not just via the use of force.

Despite the strategic concept and the deterrence and defence study it mandated, the alliance still clings to a retrograde and obsolete policy on nuclear weapons. There's an absurd element in its conclusion that as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance. Clearly, as long as NATO retains such weapons, they will continue to exist. While the alliance claims in the same breath that it is committed to creating the conditions for a nuclear weapons free world, it has apparently done little to identify and realize these conditions. Canada should be making common cause with Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, and other like-minded allies to ensure that the alliance actually has a nuclear policy that is credible and compatible with the NPT obligations of its members. A revitalization of NATO consultations would also address conventional arms control and the need to salvage the currently threatened achievements of the past, such as the CFE Treaty, and to reinforce others, such as the Vienna Document on confidence-building measures and the Open Skies Treaty, in which Canada had a major hand to play.

The last mission expressed in the strategic concept is cooperative security. This task also demands sustained consultation amongst allies and between NATO members and their partners. The dedicated councils with Russia and the Ukraine certainly require attention and a renewed effort to overcome the adversarial attitude that still characterizes many of their sessions. As part of a forward-looking conflict prevention strategy, we should also encourage a creative approach to devising norms for responsible state behaviour in cyber security and seek ways to forestall turning cyberspace into a new east-west battleground.

Canada has to be prepared to invest in the alliance if it still wants to benefit from the substantial security dividends it derives from the alliance. At a time when both DND and DFAIT are experiencing budgetary contractions, it's going to require creative and well-coordinated Canadian political and military actions to ensure that we are, in the end, a NATO policy shaper and not just a policy taker.

I thank you for your attention.

● (1555)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you, Mr. Meyer.

We have round one of questions.

Starting with the official opposition, Ms. Moore, you're on for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My first question goes to Ms. Mason.

In one of your presentations, you dealt with lessons learned in Afghanistan. You compared the roles of the UN and of NATO in these kinds of missions. Let me quote it in translation:

In short, a UN-led peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan would have been fundamentally different from the ISAF debacle. One cannot say for certain that a UN-led mission would have succeeded in helping the Afghan people reach a sustainable peace, but at least it would have had a greater possibility of doing so.

I am not now trying to redesign the mission with hypotheses and "what ifs". But, in your comments, we can see that you are making a distinction between NATO and the UN as you look at their roles and their potential in terms of diplomacy and armed or peacekeeping operations.

In recent international operations, the distinction between the UN and NATO has tended to become a little lost. So I would like to know the basic differences that we must not forget as Canadians who are so committed to international security and diplomacy.

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

If I may, I will answer in English. I hope I have fully understood the question.

[*English*]

In a nutshell, the fundamental difference between a NATO-led mission and a UN-led mission is that there is a divided command. In a UN-led mission, in the same mission there is a political authority—the head of the UN mission, the special representative of the Secretary General—with authority over the conduct of the mission, including the military element. In a NATO-led mission authorized by the UN....

If we take Afghanistan, we have a UN political mission, UNAMA, dealing sometimes with narrow elements, sometimes with broader elements. Part of the problem in Afghanistan was that the UNAMA mission initially was very narrow—it did not have a broad diplomatic peacemaking process. Then you have the NATO military mission. All of the language that NATO would use, for example, is that the military must always be in support of a political process, but the political mission, if NATO is involved, currently is separate. It's in a separate league. So you constantly have to work very hard to make sure that the NATO-led military mission reporting up to a separate political, NATO political, body, the North Atlantic Council, is in line with, you hope, the framework set out by the international community and represented by the UN political mission.

So you're dividing the political and the military roles in a situation where coherence between the two is absolutely fundamental. That's the essential difference. In a UN mission there isn't that division, and the buck stops at the political head of the mission; therefore you can ensure that all the military actions that are taken are in support of the broader political goals.

I don't know if that helps.

The historical reason we ended up with these divided missions was that a particular country, the United States, did not want to put its forces under UN command. So if the tremendous capacities of the U.S. were going to be available, it had to be in another form. So that was the origin. Initially, countries like Canada were in both. But there's a limit to how much smaller forces can do. We felt we had to choose, and Canada chose to be in the NATO-led missions.

The problem is, you have the best forces, in terms of professional capacity, separated from a framework where those forces can be most effectively used to ensure that the military action is completely in support of a broader political framework. Separating them also leads to inattention as to whether the political framework is sufficient to allow for a successful military action.

Afghanistan is the preeminent example of where the political framework was insufficient to allow for effective military action. No matter how good the military is, they aren't a substitute for an effective political framework, and if you have them together in one mission, then you better recalibrate.

Sorry I've gone on so long, but it really is—

● (1600)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): You still have a minute and 45 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Thank you. Much appreciated.

Mr. Meyer, I see that you have served both with NATO and with Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, including in Moscow.

A few months ago, another disarmament expert, Mr. Ernie Regehr, came to talk to us. He stressed the importance of ties with Russia and the need for us to reinvent our relationship with that country in disarmament matters. In terms of conventional forces, he felt that NATO represented a bigger threat for Russia than Russia does for NATO.

So I would like your comments on the matter. As a country that wants to concern itself with international security, and as a member of NATO, what relationship with Russia should Canada have? What part of the Russia-Canada relationship or the Russia-NATO relationship poses the problem in terms of arms control, disarmament and international security? How do we address those limitations?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Meyer: Exactly. There is irony for those who have historical perspectives. NATO for many years insisted it needed a nuclear deterrent policy because it was conventionally weaker than the Soviet Union of the day and the Warsaw Pact. Now the same logic is being reversed, and Moscow says it feels it has to hold on to its nuclear forces because it is conventionally weaker than NATO, and objectively, that's the case.

At the same time, I don't think that should be accepted without efforts to build the level of confidence that would enable those remaining nuclear forces to come down and for cooperation to be sustained. We have to appreciate what an incredible strategic accomplishment, particularly the European arms control and disarmament regimes, were in limiting the forces and the potential for war.

Of course, political changes of great significance went along with that, but there was a whole regime of notification, of observation, of restraint largely put under the limitation of specific weapons systems, eliminations of whole categories of ballistic missiles, for instance, in the INF Treaty. These are very important, a key that we have to continue to reinforce, and indeed to expand upon. That's why I emphasize a need for an active diplomacy regarding Russia on these matters and others.

● (1605)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you.

Mr. Strahl, you have seven minutes, sir.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to take a quick opportunity to wish all our colleagues who are participating in the Ukraine election observations the best, especially our colleague from Etobicoke Centre, Ted Opitz, who headed out today after his important Supreme Court win.

My questions are again on the idea of nuclear disarmament. There is certainly lots of interest in this discussion around the NATO-Russia relationship, and I'll come back to that in a minute.

Diplomacy with Russia may be possible. I think we can say we continue to have good diplomatic relations there, with bumps on the road for sure. What about countries like North Korea or Iran, which have nuclear capability or certainly nuclear aspirations? Some would say it would be irresponsible for NATO to unilaterally disarm or to not have their eyes open to that threat, so as long as there are countries we don't have diplomatic relations with, or that are outside the mainstream of the international community, would it not be a little short-sighted to eliminate NATO's capabilities in the face of that threat?

Mr. Meyer.

Mr. Paul Meyer: I think it would be if it were unilateral, and that's not what I would be advocating. There is some scope for initial action. For instance, the repatriation of the remaining U.S. nuclear gravity bombs in Europe is a step that would be helpful for overall relations and would facilitate a further move to getting transparency and controls relating to the Russian so-called substrategic or tactical nuclear weapons that remain in the European area.

When I speak about a more energetic approach to nuclear disarmament matters, it's more the end driving the diplomacy of this to look at ways in which the current levels can be brought down. All of the nuclear-weapons-possessing states would be involved in that. The current attitude of many is that as long as the United States and Russia have something like 95% of the total nuclear arsenal, it's for them to bring down their numbers at least substantially, into the hundreds rather than the thousands, and at that point they would be willing to move.

More than a generation after the Cold War, it is incumbent on all states, non-nuclear weapon states as well as nuclear weapon states, to get more serious about the elimination of what remains a catastrophic if ever used arm, and frankly one that is a diversion from the contemporary military challenges, which are largely in the conventional field.

Mr. Mark Strahl: There is a reasonable dialogue among the United States, Europe, and the Russians. But from what I have seen, certainly we don't have normalized diplomatic relations with North Korea and with Iran. My question is more on those two. What do we do there, where we are not having an open dialogue—or an open discussion anyway?

● (1610)

Mr. Paul Meyer: Obviously those are two difficult cases. If you take North Korea, it's probably the most bizarre regime that currently exists in the world, the most Stalinistic in the worst sense of that. It is a very hard nut to crack in terms of expecting the usual sorts of international behaviour.

That said, I think there are pressures that can be brought to bear, and incentives, and through time a normalization of relations as part of an agreement to de-nuclearize the Korean peninsula is the best prospect.

As China has to assume greater responsibilities as a great power, there can be expectations that Beijing is going to have to be more constructive and assertive vis-à-vis its titular ally in North Korea, and exert pressure on them.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Because of your experience both in NATO and with the Russian people, what are Russia's commitments with respect to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation?

What are your observations with respect to Russia's decision to withdraw from the Nunn-Lugar initiative?

Mr. Paul Meyer: Russia, like all NPT state parties, has an obligation to effect nuclear disarmament, and clearly, as a nuclear weapon state, it has the requirement to take a leading role in that regard, and there has been some progress. Unfortunately, the pace of that reduction, on both the U.S. and Russian sides, I think is far from satisfactory.

I think we have to objectively acknowledge that the espousal of ballistic missile defence in the United States has been a complicating factor, as Russia worries about the potential implications for its deterrent forces if a full-fledged development of that technology goes ahead.

I mentioned briefly the conventional military, the relative inferiority, and as a result that's been a drag. But it has made a commitment through the new START treaty, and I think it's incumbent, again, on all the states that have relations with Moscow to argue that it needs to show a leadership role and to move more rapidly to bring down its arsenals and to be responsible in their use.

The Nunn-Lugar was a very useful program, but I think there is a good argument to be made that now that Russia is in better financial circumstances, it should be financing its own removal of its antiquated and surplus WMD and not have to rely on the largesse of the G-8 countries, including Canada, for that sort of assistance. Maybe there are other countries that could benefit more or be more deserving of receiving G-8 global partnership money at this point in time than Russia.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you very much.

The next questioner is Mr. McKay. Sir, you have seven minutes.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

First I'd like to ask a question of Professor Mason, and then I'll move to Professor Meyer.

I was struck by your comment that if NATO had stayed within, in effect, a blue helmet capability, the approach to Afghanistan might well have been quite a bit different. You were using Afghanistan as an example, and I assume you have other examples. The lead cannot be military when the solution is in fact political, and the emphasis should be on the preventing of conflict. The tragedy for Canada is that it left us incapable of contributing to blue helmet peacekeeping/peacemaking operations.

Around here, there seems to be some contentment with the notion that we have no real blue helmet capacity. Is it therefore your recommendation that the military-government revisit the capacity that we've had in the past to actually participate in either NATO or UN-led operations, which have as their lead the concept of peacemaking or peacekeeping or conflict resolution, etc.—in other words, moving towards a "political solution" before it becomes a military conflict.

● (1615)

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thank you very much for that question.

I'd like to go back for a second to the hard lesson, the frustration of the Canadian experience, particularly in the UN Protection Force in the former Yugoslavia, and then compare that to the feeling of satisfaction over the NATO-led missions, IFOR and SFOR, which kind of reinforced the view that we don't want to be in the UN stuff, we want to be in the NATO-led stuff.

I alluded to one change that's happened, one big change, in terms of the UN organizing itself to better engage in these very complex peace operations. But the other aspect I'd like to highlight, which really must not be forgotten, is that the UN Protection Force in the former Yugoslavia was destroyed essentially when there was no peace to keep in the middle of a war. The very robust international stabilization force, the NATO stabilization force, that deployed after the Dayton agreement deployed in the context of an agreement to implement.

So the lesson, I would argue, is not just that you need a capable military force, but you need a peace agreement to implement. That's the part of the equation that got lost when we moved into the NATO side of things and focused our efforts very much on the military capability, and we lost sight of the fact that the two elements really are incredibly important. Then when you're talking about that peacemaking framework, the UN is pre-eminently the lead on that.

In terms of what I'm recommending as a first step—because obviously, this is a change in thinking, a big change—I'm proposing that countries like Canada, with the experience that we've had, engage in a dialogue, take the lead in the NATO and UN context to sponsor a dialogue with the UN on lessons from the use of force in these complex operations.

Hon. John McKay: We function here under the curse of time, so let me just focus you a little on Libya. What's the lesson learned there? Certainly, under General Bouchard that was a successful military operation, but we seemed to have abandoned ship with respect to the post-conflict conflict, shall we say. What are your pithy takeaways on that?

Ms. Peggy Mason: I might just say, as an aside, that I was happy to have...General Bouchard was the first Canadian commander I was involved in training with. This was before he ended up as the head of that very important mission.

Maybe we would have done exactly the same thing as we did. But the problem we see with Libya is this. Are we asking the question, did we win in the short term only to lose in the long term? The focus on military action meant that weapons were widely dispersed, not only in Libya but also in the region, in the subregion, and it's led to severe destabilization.

It's impossible to say, in hindsight, but possibly if we had been more cognizant of the fact that there has to be a political solution in the end and cognizant of the dangers of a short-term military effort, and what that can lead to, maybe—maybe—we would have done the same thing. But maybe we would have focused on the political dimension much more at the outset. That might have meant that we wouldn't have necessarily have put conditions on the peace process, like Gadhafi has to go. Conditions that couldn't be met led to the military operation. It causes you to look at it in a different way; it causes you to say to yourself, "The military approach has big risks and big costs."

● (1620)

Hon. John McKay: Professor Meyer, you made an interesting observation with respect to the withdrawal from the AWACS, in the context of smart defence and things of that nature. This was a bewildering decision by the government. Of course, it's in a context of a whole bunch of bewildering decisions, but anyway....

The withdrawal seems to me to have significant implications for any future military missions we might wish to participate in. Am I correct in that assumption?

Mr. Paul Meyer: Clearly, it's a key capability. It was used in the Libyan operation, for example. When you're part of the program, you have access to that. There were 17 countries in the program, I believe, and I'm not sure how we, as a country that has dropped out, can benefit. Maybe there's a pay-for-use option. As I said in my opening statement, I thought it was an unfortunate act. This is exactly the direction a smart defence would point you in, trying to procure high-ticket items on a common alliance basis.

Hon. John McKay: But don't you have to question how smart is smart?

Mr. Paul Meyer: What I'm saying is that the objective of the smart defence, as I understand that kind of terminology, is that you're looking to get benefits and cost efficiencies. One way of doing that is instead of having each member state attempt to acquire really expensive kits or capabilities, they could do it in a collective way, and that would benefit the collective defence purposes of the alliance.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you, sir. Your time is up.

We're now into round two, and our first questioner is Mr. Norlock for five minutes.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to the witnesses for appearing today.

My question is for Mr. Meyer. The question will carry on with the Libyan thing, but with a little different twist. The Libyan mission required some level of coordination with regional partners such as the Arab League and the African Union. Something that is discussed a great deal within the strategic concept is the need for NATO to establish stronger partnerships with countries or regions that are not members of the alliance.

In your opinion, how important was it for the mission in Libya and for future missions that NATO build strong working partnerships with other countries or regions, similar to or like the African Union or the perhaps within the Asia-Pacific countries?

Mr. Paul Meyer: In short, I think it's very important that those partnerships be developed.

In the absence of the Arab League call for active military engagement in Libya, I don't think the operation would have happened. NATO would have been ill-advised to have attempted that without the political cover, if you will, that came from having an Arab association of states in that region, and afterwards the African Union also, I recall, had a political endorsement. That's an excellent example of reaching out. While there was a very token participation by Qatar in that operation, the political blessing was invaluable in terms of the credibility, and ultimately the acceptability, of that intervention.

Again this has to be thought through more in ongoing consultative processes to identify some of those potential partners and build up.

Peggy's quite right. The ideal would be to do all of this under the UN, where you could fuse a civilian and a military capacity, but the military dimension of the UN, even though it's in the charter, was never realized. So we have to find a way. NATO provides the most sophisticated military capability, but it has to ensure that others feel part of the action, that they have a voice at the table. That working out is still in flux, I would say, to get the proper way that other partners feel they can have a political say and not just their contribution to the enterprise.

● (1625)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Are you saying that since they share the same continent, the African Union and the Arab League should be more involved in the Libyan situation rather than NATO?

Mr. Paul Meyer: I think there has to be greater responsibility, and to be fair, I think the African Union in particular has moved along that route. But one also has to acknowledge the limited capabilities of many of those states.

A good example of this NATO force multiplication, if you will, that I would advocate was that NATO agreed to provide strategic airlift to African Union forces in connection with the mission in Somalia, an African Union/UN-blessed mission, but the reality is that without the help of a sophisticated military-heavy airlift, those troops couldn't readily get in and be supplied, etc. So I'd like to see more of this.

The reality is that NATO is an alliance of fairly developed states. They have capabilities that the majority of other states lack. Yet those other states should have a role, and can provide, let's say, the infantry, or can provide some basic elements. But if NATO could come with those more sophisticated aspects and assets, I think that represents a very reasonable and solid way of performing both the military function as well as clearly having an expanded political partnership. Those are the routes of the future, in my mind.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

I'd like to switch gears now and head into outer space.

Professor, you—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): If you can do that in 30 seconds or so, that would be great.

Mr. Rick Norlock: I guess I'm going to have to *Star Trek* for another question.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): You have 30 seconds, so you can....

Mr. Rick Norlock: I want to talk about the disarmament in space, and about the fact that, yes, we can have the big players. We have 60 nations currently engaged in space for a myriad of reasons, whether it be defence, security, or communications.

I'm wondering to what extent, from a weaponization perspective, should NATO have a role with respect to securing outer space.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): I have to ask you to make it succinct, Mr. Meyer.

Mr. Paul Meyer: Yes. I think NATO consultations on how to safeguard the current benign environment of outer space are very much an appropriate political task for the alliance.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you, sir.

Our next questioner is Mr. Kellway, for five minutes.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and through you to our witnesses, thank you very much, both of you, for your very interesting presentations today.

Ms. Mason, you were about to talk about your proposal, I think, before Mr. McKay cut you off with his poetic flourish about the curse of time. I'd like to hear a little more about that proposal, about Canada sponsoring a dialogue at the UN about the use of force. I don't know whether your proposal is incomplete, but would you like to finish that?

I'd like to hear what you anticipate would emerge from such a dialogue.

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thank you very much.

There's been quite a vigorous ongoing process on the UN side examining lessons learned from UN-led missions, so blue helmet missions. There's a lot of good work going on there. But the UN, as an organization, cannot be seen to be standing in judgment over NATO-led operations, so there isn't the same kind of broad examination. Individual NATO countries are looking at their experience in Afghanistan, for example, but there isn't that rigorous looking at some of the key issues that have arisen, which has been very problematic in the UN context.

In particular, it's this issue of the limits of the use of force. No matter how robust your military capability is, the aim of a stabilization mission, whether UN or NATO, is not to end up going to war with the parties; it's to stabilize the situation. What are the limits of the use of force? How many have to be inside the tent to make it work versus isolating the spoilers? The UN has gone quite a long way in that discussion with respect to its mission, but I think it's fundamental that we bring in all of the hard-fought NATO experience on this. That requires Canada to sponsor it.

Now there are other elements, too. The second element to look at would be the challenges of divided missions, where the political and military leadership is separate, as in a NATO-led mission and a UN mission, versus an integrated mission, which is the UN model. Look at that, and if it is a bridge too far to get many NATO countries to re-engage under UN leadership, can we look at ways that we can minimize the problems of the divided leadership?

Canada, talking to other NATO countries, and then sponsoring this dialogue in the UN.... The UN would have to be involved, and there are mechanisms to do this.

● (1630)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: So you anticipate, then, that we will come to a conclusion about the limits of the use of force, and presumably in a more creative or constructive way. Do we start talking about this broader inclusive and credible political framework you've mentioned? Does that exist on a drawing board in the UN presently, in your mind? Can you lay it out a bit for us in a very short period of time?

Ms. Peggy Mason: In a nutshell, it depends on every single mission. There are, in fact, now on the table at least a couple of very comprehensive proposals—it's late in the day—for bringing, for starting, for making a major effort for the first time to develop a comprehensive political framework for Afghanistan. The latest one would be the International Crisis Group's very comprehensive recommendations with respect to a UN-led process, which would involve all of the troop contributors to ISAF and the others to develop.... You have to negotiate the framework.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Is the political framework specific to each set of circumstances?

Ms. Peggy Mason: Yes.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: The political framework you're talking about is not housed in the UN, in terms of structures, authorities, relationships. It's specific to a conflict or some sort of crisis.

Ms. Peggy Mason: The UN has the general understanding of the elements that are required, but essentially by "political framework" I mean ideally, in the best case, we're talking about a peace agreement that's been negotiated and then you can implement it. That is the best case. Okay, we don't have a peace agreement, but do we have a peace process? Are all the parties that need to be in the peace process there? Are most of them there? Are enough of them there? That's the political framework. Are all the key regional players there?

The issue over and over and over again with Afghanistan was the role of Pakistan, but lecturing and hectoring and threatening Pakistan to stop playing a negative role and start playing a positive role could really only be achieved in the context of a comprehensive peace process that met Pakistan's needs. That's the kind of thing that needs to be discussed. Really, the UN is the one that has the expertise to lead on this, but others have very valuable input to give from their experiences in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you very much, Mr. Kellway. Your time has now expired.

Next is Mr. Harris.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Harris.

I'm a guest at today's committee meeting, and unfortunately we didn't have the text from either of you, so I'm having to remember some of the things you said. Maybe being a newcomer is a benefit because I'm hearing some things that really I have to ask about. They may sound a little simplistic.

Ms. Mason, you talked about an effective political framework being in place, or created somehow prior to a military action. I'm thinking that in so many of the countries we're talking about, where they're led by murderous forces like the Taliban, dictators who have lived only by the gun and for the gun for the sake of power...it sounds to me like somewhat of a pipe dream to think that the UN, which incidentally gives so many stages to someone like the dictator of Iran, and in my opinion has lost a lot of credibility by doing that, certainly among the western nations.... It sounds like something of a pipe dream to believe that creating an effective political structure, as you put it, could actually happen prior to a military action.

How can you justify the statement that perhaps it could have worked in Afghanistan? Even the thought of getting that together in Afghanistan, given the circumstances there...it seems unbelievable that we could have had something like that.

● (1635)

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thank you so much for the question.

In fact, of course, hindsight is always a wonderful thing; everything is so much clearer in hindsight, and I'm very conscious of that.

First of all, we have to distinguish between a military action and a stabilization action or a crisis management action. So the very first actions that were taken in Afghanistan, which were clearly to rout out the Taliban, are not what we're talking about in terms of post that activity, the stabilization effort, which NATO ultimately came to lead.

In fact, in that context, the international community did try to put in place a political framework. It started with the Bonn agreement and it became the London agreement. There was a very wide framework. The problem was it left out a key actor, the Taliban, and the Pashtuns, to a large extent, who were the single biggest ethnic group in Afghanistan. In hindsight, many have said, and in fact Brahimi said it at the time, that the best time to negotiate that agreement was when the Taliban were incredibly weak and almost decimated.

If there had been an inclusive political framework then, things might be very different now, but because there wasn't one, ultimately the military action was not sufficient to stabilize the situation. And everyone knows the situation we're in with Afghanistan now.

Mr. Richard Harris: If I can just make a point, my point was that organizations like the Taliban, no matter at what strength they are, really have no mind for any type of an effective political framework or structure that had any sense of democracy where the people actually had a voice. That isn't how they've operated over the many decades or centuries that they've been in power or seeking power in Afghanistan.

How could they be expected to magically be willing to participate in setting up an effective political structure? It doesn't seem possible. It's just not them. It never has been. They've indicated it never will be. They want complete power, and control by force, which is the only thing that they've clearly demonstrated they know. Anyone who stands in their way will be killed.

How can you get that politicized?

Ms. Peggy Mason: Of course, they don't go back for centuries. They're a creature of the arming of the mujahedeen and the training in the madrasas, when encountering the Soviets when they were in Afghanistan.

To bring it down to the hard realities, we didn't negotiate with the Taliban when they were at their weakest. This was after the American military action in the wake of September 11, which Canada participated in with certain forces. We didn't put a political framework in with them then when they were at their weakest. Now we—maybe not Canada, but the United States and others, certainly the U.S.—are engaged in negotiating with them when they're much stronger. In the end you have to negotiate. My argument is we would have been much better off if we'd been aware at the outset of how important that was. That was the best scenario for negotiating. Now we're probably in the worst scenario. But those negotiations are taking place because there has to be an end to the war, and the war cannot end by military means, as has been demonstrated so dramatically over what's now the longest war the United States has been engaged in.

● (1640)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you, Ms. Mason.

Our next intervenor is Mr. Choquette, another guest to our committee.

Welcome, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for coming to testify before us, ladies and gentlemen.

My questions go to Ms. Mason.

First, I would like to say that I totally agree with you. At some stage, we have to negotiate, of course. We would be better off starting right away if we are going to possibly reach negotiated political solutions. Certainly, the armed option should be the last one. In that respect, I think there should be a lot more blue helmets from Canada. We had them before and the country was proud of them.

To what extent does NATO's new strategic concept incorporate the lessons the organization has learned in the last decade?

Ms. Peggy Mason: I will answer in English, if I may.

[*English*]

That gives me an opportunity to speak on the nuclear side for just a second. In my written remarks I associated myself completely with Ernie Regehr's comments on nuclear disarmament. I certainly agree with Paul Meyer and what he said. In other words, one of the things about the strategic concept that I find very encouraging is that it really reduces the role of nuclear weapons.

It also recognizes—and I welcome this recognition in the strategic concept—the importance of conflict prevention and what needs to be done after. A reference was made earlier about what's happening in Libya. There is, of course, a very comprehensive UN mission now in Libya trying to handle the huge post-conflict nation-building effort. I wish there were capable military forces from NATO countries as part of that mission. I hope I didn't sound too negative in my comments.

I think NATO has learned extremely valuable lessons with respect to what is required for crisis management and for conflict prevention and conflict resolution. But there are still some big lessons to learn. I focused in particular on this lesson about the primacy of the peace process, however difficult it may be. I agree with Mr. Harris that this is not an easy task. None of this is easy. That's why we have to bring our best game to the table if we're going to be able to do this. That means we need the best militaries, but it also means we need the best political framework, and the UN has the preeminent expertise there. Of course, NATO can play in and assist with that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: I agree with you.

To what extent are NATO's rules and structures put to the test because of the nature of current conflicts, modern ones? In other words, what will be NATO's biggest challenges in the future?

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Mason: Perhaps while I'm collecting myself you can answer.

Mr. Paul Meyer: I feel that I did flag in my opening statement the cyber security area. This is an emerging realm. It's one that has not yet been weaponized, but it could very soon become so, and I think it's incumbent on the diplomacy here that has lagged way behind military developments. Here, NATO has begun to look after its own cyber defence, and that's helpful. But I think it also should see in this conflict prevention prism the capacity to start negotiating with the Russians and others about a confidence-building regime, a regime of restraint regarding possible offensive cyber operations. That's an element of emerging challenge that could be usefully taken advantage of.

As well as developing these complex but important crisis management mechanisms, you have the partnering with other states so that those that are contributing in some way to a mission that the alliance has been asked to undertake also feel they have a political voice in these processes.

● (1645)

Ms. Peggy Mason: I wonder if I can just add another point.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Briefly, please.

Ms. Peggy Mason: I would point to the work that NATO is doing on counter-piracy with respect to offshore Somalia, for example. This is a new area for NATO in terms of crisis management. Huge amounts of money are being spent. I would argue this dialogue that I'm talking about with the UN might cause countries like Canada that are participating in that action to look at whether money would be better spent if we really looked at the kind of stabilization, force, and political framework agreement that might be required to stabilize Somalia.

Counter-piracy is a never-ending operation because young men don't have jobs and there's a never-ending supply of them out there engaging in very lucrative and innovative acts of piracy. Yes, it was wonderful that NATO stepped into the breach to help, but it really should be seen as a short-term focus while looking at how we can really get in on a comprehensive solution to the problem of a destabilized Somalia.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you very much.

We now have Mr. Sopuck. You're next for five minutes.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): You talked about the development of a political framework in Afghanistan, and I presume you meant a democratic political framework. Functioning democracies require functioning institutions, and that's a word I hadn't heard anybody bring up. As Fukuyama writes in his book, *The Origins of Political Order*, which I'm sure you're very familiar with, the development of institutions takes centuries, and a culture has to change over an immense period of time in order to create the institution that will then create a country that has order, like our country has, like Britain has.

How do you develop a political framework for a country in the absence of functioning institutions, say, within a culture that's a tribal culture?

Ms. Peggy Mason: Of course, the political framework is there to start the process. Again, in Afghanistan many of these elements are there. There is a huge effort to try to build proper, effective democratic institutions. The missing element in Afghanistan wasn't that there wasn't a political framework in Afghanistan; it was that it wasn't an inclusive political framework. In effect, it privileged one side in a civil war and left out the other side. That has caused extreme problems for the credibility of the government, for example. Many of the Afghan people would say, “Why are the warlords who abused us here, there, and everywhere now the privileged members of government?” It's not only the Taliban that they criticize.

So it's not that there wasn't quite an extensive institution-building effort identified in the political framework for Afghanistan; it was this one aspect of it, which I'm arguing is a critical aspect—an inclusive framework. That wasn't there, and unfortunately that's undermined the whole thing.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I think, however, in less developed countries tribalism is almost innate; tribalism is almost genetically in us. That's why the development of functioning institutions took centuries, because we have to overcome our tribal nature. When you throw in endemic corruption and tribalism, I become less optimistic all the time.

One of my roles in Parliament is as chair of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group. That is a European country that, of any country, should have developed into a functioning democracy, and yet it's not even happening there.

When you look at where Afghanistan is, I don't know.... Help me out here.

● (1650)

Ms. Peggy Mason: You're wise to be very concerned and cautious.

This effort that we're talking about is really, as you have identified, an effort to short-circuit what took a very long time to develop in our own countries. It's an effort at social engineering, let's be blunt.

My argument is that if we're going to do it, we have to bring our best game to the table. That means that we really have to be sure that we, on every side, in NATO, at the UN, are capturing the lessons on what works and what doesn't. Even then there aren't any guarantees, but there's a better chance to maybe make it work, and also to be realistic about how much you can achieve over what period of time.

Afghanistan never got into full stabilization, so it was never able to get on to the next phase. President Karzai had to spend most of his time shoring up alliances, covering his back, because of the ongoing, in effect, civil war. It was the worst case for doing what everyone has to agree is an extraordinarily difficult task.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): You have about 45 seconds.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Again, it's fundamental to policy-making to decide whether it's even possible or not. While I'm a “glass is half full guy” most of the time, when you look at some of these situations —and you think of that poor girl who was shot in Afghanistan for wanting to go to school—I think for the enemies of western civilization, that is a mentality. I don't know how you deal with that in a rational way.

Mr. Paul Meyer: It was in Pakistan.

All you could say is that's a diverse country. There are secular forces and more reasonable elements there. There's an active lawyers' association. Unfortunately, it's a messy landscape, but I don't think we can throw up our hands. We have to look at ways of identifying who are, in a way, the allies of our liberal democracy, or at least potentially who are working to build up their institutions, and try to aid those local advocates as much as possible.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): That's your time, sir. Thank you very much.

We're back to Ms. Moore.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Thank you.

My question goes to Ms. Mason.

The committee has learned that, while NATO always turns to the UN for a mandate to conduct expeditionary operations, the alliance does not need a UN mandate to undertake a mission, particularly in defence of an ally. Knowing that, and in that context, what should NATO do when the UN Security Council is paralyzed?

Mr. Paul Meyer: Do you mean when the Security Council is deadlocked?

Ms. Christine Moore: Yes, when it is not moving forward on a given issue.

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

Your question is a very good one.

It was very interesting, if you consider the past testimony of the NATO representatives on this issue—Deputy Assistant Secretary General James Appathurai, for example. He emphasized how important it was for NATO to have the legitimacy of a UN mandate, and he noted that there was only one occasion where for a short time, because of the blockage—and of course he was talking about Kosovo—military action was taken without a UN mandate, and ultimately there was a retroactive endorsement by the UN, if you will. I would point to that because one of the things NATO has learned through the operations it has been engaged in is how fundamentally important having that UN authorization and legitimacy is.

In our previous discussion we talked about how difficult these actions are. Without UN authorization, they are infinitely more difficult, and that is part of the issue with respect to Syria, I would suggest. It's just so difficult to have the necessary broad legitimacy in your operation—to have, for example, Arab participants in the Libyan operation because it was broadly supported by the international community and had that important UN sanction. That is so fundamental to the success of an operation.

I will say right now that it doesn't mean there might not be some exception in the future where we say, oh, the council is so blocked, and we really believe we have to act even without it. But that should be seen as an extraordinary exception in extraordinary circumstances, because you're making your chances of success that much more difficult.

I don't know if that answers your question or not.

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: If I understand correctly, you are saying that NATO has more of an interest in working to help the Security Council out of its deadlock or its paralysis than in deciding to operate without UN backing.

Mr. Paul Meyer: I would like to clarify something. Under international law, only the Security Council has the right to authorize the use of force. NATO cannot legitimately act alone.

The problem with the Libya mission is that, at the Security Council, Russia and China abstained on the resolution authorizing the use of force. They were disappointed, so to speak, with the way the mission was conducted and with the fact that they lack political control and influence over NATO actions. This is the root of the current problem with Syria. They do not want a repeat of what Moscow and Beijing see as the mistake, the failure in Libya.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you, Mr. Meyer.

Our next intervenor is Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and through you to our witnesses.

First of all, this question is for Mr. Meyer. Given that your organization and you, yourself, promote disarmament, do you see the proposed missile shield through Europe and the U.S., and Australia as well, to detect and intercept launches by Iran as necessary?

Mr. Paul Meyer: There are elements there. I think at the moment it's not a capability that I would give priority to. Iran doesn't currently have a long-range ballistic missile capability, and I don't think the relative threat perception in Europe would warrant a big effort on this front. Part of the difficulty is that the same system, the Aegis standard ballistic missile system, which is deployed by the U.S. on behalf of NATO at this stage, is one that is in the process of development and expansion. Down the road, some of the missiles that are envisaged for that system have a capacity in terms of velocity that would allow them to intercept a Russian missile. That is really the worry that has led Moscow to object to this. They've asked for legal, written assurances from Washington that this would not be the case, and Washington has demurred on that.

My own sense is that with Iran, the emphasis should be on the current ratcheting up of diplomatic pressure and isolation on Tehran, until such time as it takes some action to reassure the international community about its intentions, particularly regarding its nuclear program. In my mind, that's where we should be focusing our energies, our investment, for the current period.

● (1700)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Do you believe that Iran's nuclear capability is solely for peaceful purposes, for medical isotopes and energy?

Mr. Paul Meyer: I think its direction is still unclear. That is why there's a need to have it cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency. The objective of the sanctions the UN Security Council has passed on Iran is to encourage it to make that cooperation. As authoritative a presence as the director of national intelligence in the United States has indicated that they do not have an indication that Iran is currently engaged in a nuclear weapons development program. But there are clearly doubts about its operations that merit full exposure and cooperation, as long as Iran, as it is, remains a non-proliferation treaty member state.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Part of the rationale for a nuclear capability on the part of NATO nations who have it is that by virtue of a highly democratized country with a capability in Europe, the perceived need for a nuclear capability by smaller countries is lessened. They don't feel they have to put money or effort into a program because somebody there will protect them also.

Do you see this as a concrete reason for these NATO countries to be nuclear-capable?

Mr. Paul Meyer: Not for the longer term. Again, the alliance says it wants to put the conditions in place for a nuclear-weapons-free world, in accordance with the NPT obligations that all the NATO member states have signed up to. I think that's a positive statement. What I'd like to see is more energy and action towards achieving it.

Frankly, from a purely military perspective, the best outcome for NATO, and the west more broadly, would be if tomorrow you could eliminate all nuclear weapons, because NATO and the west enjoy a massive superiority in conventional military power that would be even more dominant if there were no weapons of mass destruction out there as a potential deterrent.

So both from, you might say, a hard-nosed strategic benefit perspective as well as from the political obligation of achieving our goal of nuclear disarmament, I think more could be done there.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you. Your time is up, Ms. Gallant.

Now we go to our next intervenor on the same side of the fence, or the same side of the room, at least, Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I would allow Ms. Gallant to continue with her questioning.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): That's perfectly acceptable.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The UN is certainly watching the situation in Mali very closely. You've suggested at length—and this question is for Ms. Mason—that NATO participate in blue helmet missions, and that had this been the case and applied in the Afghanistan conflict, the outcome would have been very different.

What role or mission type do you see NATO filling in Mali?

Ms. Peggy Mason: Again, I have to make one qualification, because I don't want to suggest there's any magic solution to any of this stuff. My argument with respect to how Afghanistan might have turned out is that we might have had a better chance, we might be in a better place now than we are after all this time and effort, if we had heeded some of the lessons from UN peace operations. I certainly do not wish to suggest that there's some kind of magic solution to these very difficult situations.

With respect to Mali, it's a stabilization situation. It's a negotiation, and the UN is looking at what can they do. There's this very serious problem now of big weapons capability out there in the hands of very problematic elements, who are destabilizing the country, which has its own internal problems, but it had been stabilized, and then the subregion as well. So it would be a matter for the UN, and the country itself, in terms of identifying what help it needs. If it identifies that it wants external help in stabilizing the situation, and if the external help that it thinks it needs includes a military component, then there might be either a look at NATO offering forces in the context of a UN-led mission or, as I talk about in my paper but didn't get to, and which Paul Meyer talked about, there might be capabilities, there might be specific equipment, there might be an airlift, there might be other elements that NATO, with its advanced capabilities, could provide to help.

There's no one answer. It's really in the context of the UN working with Mali and the subregion to see what might be required and possible to stabilize, to get those weapons under control, and then how can NATO contribute to that, either as NATO or as individual member states.

● (1705)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I'll go back to Mr. Meyer.

What do you see as NATO's role in cyber security?

Mr. Paul Meyer: I mentioned, initially, of course, to get your own house in order, ensure that you have good cyber defences for the NATO system and for the systems of member states, and be in the position to assist them if they come under attack.

Last year there was a NATO cyber defence doctrine, a policy, that was promulgated, and that's largely where it is. That's good as far as it goes. I'd like to see it go farther, though. What I was suggesting is to begin looking at the diplomatic context for developing some norms of what is sometimes referred to as responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, to recognize that there's a potential offensive military use that probably should be prohibited or strictly regulated, given the unique nature and dependency of humanity on a secure and operating cyber....

Here's an example. We talked about conflict prevention. It's an emerging issue. It's open to early treatment. I think this would be an excellent initiative for NATO to take, to expand beyond, as I say, just it's own cyber defence.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chairman, the witness mentioned that NATO member countries could be of assistance if one came under attack. Now the key point in NATO is article 5. If a country is under attack, it's deemed to be an attack on all. At what point should article 5 be invoked should there be a cyber attack? And how would this assistance materialize?

Mr. Paul Meyer: Up to now, NATO has been reluctant to declare any cyber attack as the equivalent to an armed attack, which is what triggers article 5. So in the case of Estonia, you'll see it did not invoke article 5. That said, there's article 4 on consultation, and that was utilized. In the cyber defence doctrine that I just referred to, you will see that basically it says that if a member state feels the need for assistance as a result of a cyber attack, it can make a request and NATO will try to assist.

That's how it is being handled today. I think that's a reasonable approach within the alliance.

● (1710)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you, Mr. Meyer.

Our next questioner is another guest, Monsieur Larose.

Welcome to our committee. You have five minutes.

We have you on the list, Madame St-Denis. You are next after Monsieur Larose. Welcome to our committee too.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Vice-Chair.

My question goes to Mr. Meyer. Thank you for joining us today.

Could you please describe for us some of the strengths and weaknesses of the current nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation treaties?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Meyer: Yes. There are a number of challenges before the international community in terms of non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament, and part of that is of course to realize what the non-proliferation treaty, which is the most widely adhered to extant international security accord, with 189 states parties and only four states outside that regime.... The treaty calls for nuclear disarmament and for non-proliferation, and it calls for the peaceful use of atomic energy. There has been some progress in all those areas, but clearly a lot more could be done.

I think one area that has been mentioned and is part of the last review conference of the NPT in 2010 is a consensus document that has a number of action plans. One of those was to reduce the operational status of nuclear forces. As many of you will know, even over a generation after the end of the Cold War there are still almost a thousand deployed strategic forces in both Russia and the United States on so-called “hair trigger alert”. I think the danger of that posture is something that needs to be addressed, particularly given the radically improved strategic situation and political relationship. That was one area that the states have signed up for but for which, frankly, action is not forthcoming.

Another area that Canada has been active on is the so-called Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. Fissile material is the stuff you make nuclear weapons out of, so it's kind of a no-brainer that if you really want to achieve nuclear disarmament, one of the first things you will want to do is turn off the tap of the production.That has been an agreed goal of the international community for almost 50 years, and again, it was part of the NPT outcomes. Unfortunately, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which was to negotiate this treaty, hasn't been able to agree on a program of work since 1998, and we're now in a situation where countries are rightly saying that if the CD can't deliver, let's look at other ways. Canada is the traditional lead on a resolution, which is now before the General Assembly as we speak, that suggests setting up a group of governmental experts to help develop the content of this treaty.

I think it could even be more operational than that, but here's another example of something that is recognized as a priority and yet for years we haven't been able to deliver. The comprehensive test ban treaty is another. Again, eight countries are preventing it from entering formally into force. I'd like to see those countries do the right thing and bring that treaty.

Mr. Jean-François Larose: How much time do I have left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): You have another minute and a half.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Larose: The next question follows on from what you have just mentioned. I find it very interesting. After the end of the Cold War, you might say these things have been forgotten. But the threat is even greater.

What role could Canada play inside NATO in terms of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Meyer: I think we could try to regain some of the leadership role we had at the time within the alliance on these matters.

I refer to the importance of the consultative mechanisms. That's one of the jewels of the alliance, but again, they're only as good as you use them. There was a time when Canada was much more active in trying to challenge and push the alliance to have more progressive approaches to some of these issues.

I think there needs to be a revival of that mechanism. There's some very ambiguous wording at the end of the Chicago Summit statement that sort of suggests that we had better do more here, but I'm not aware of anything concrete having come.

The other is, don't be cavalierly unique here too. There are like-minded allies. Canada also needs to engage with those so that you have a greater clout within the alliance, which is, as you know, 28 states working on a consensus basis. You need to have friends on these matters.

I think there are many countries that would like to see more activity: joining up, partnering with the likes of Germany and The Netherlands, Norway, Turkey, and others to ensure the alliance remains credible and is seen as a positive force, not a drag on progress in arms control and disarmament.

I think those are the kinds of priorities I would advocate for Canada.

● (1715)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you.

Madame St. Denis, you have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Thank you.

It is a pleasure to take part in this meeting of your committee, though I am just passing through and my knowledge of these issues is somewhat limited.

I am going to ask just one question about Libya. The committee has learned that the new government in Libya has not asked NATO for any post-conflict assistance. Which organizations generally play that role? Should NATO have any on-going responsibilities towards Libya, in your view?

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Mason: With respect to Libya, there was the Security Council resolution establishing a UN mission to try to carry forward and stabilize the situation in Libya and help foster the kinds of democratic institutions we were talking about earlier. It's a very comprehensive resolution under the UN lead. This is a mission that is led by the UN, so the military elements are under the authority of the UN head of mission. That means that if NATO is going to help, it would have to be individual NATO countries submitting forces, which I think would be extremely helpful. But also one would hope that there is a dialogue back and forth, because there are exchanges officers between NATO and the UN discussing whether it's NATO itself or individual NATO countries, whether or not there's equipment, whether or not there are specialized capacities that could help. It would be that kind of dialogue.

But because this is a UN blue helmet mission, the only way that NATO forces.... They don't need a request; NATO forces do not need a request to NATO to offer help to the UN, but that would be the way they would have to do it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lise St-Denis: I will stop there. That is enough.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you very much, and thank you for joining us today.

The next person on our list is Mr. Norlock. You can take your space again. You have five minutes.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Well, I'd be lost in space.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): We wouldn't want to see you lost in space.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Through you, Mr. Chair, to our witnesses, I was listening to the discussion on nuclear disarmament concerning Iran, and you failed to mention the elephant in the room with regard to nuclear capability or incapability...the building nuclear capability; you and I may disagree on the extent of that, but I think it is the building; they almost admit it is. I guess the elephant in the room is Israel. There is a nation that is beginning to build a nuclear capacity and a nation that has a nuclear capacity, and of course Israel has her friends and her not so friends. That's what I think worries many of us.

Some of us—I'm just talking individually here—would be prepared to sit back and let the international community, through the UN...which is very painstaking, because of all the push-pull. Some of us would be prepared to sit back and wait to see if in actual fact Iran is just looking for power by the atom. But here it says that it wants to wipe another country off the face of the earth; that country has a nuclear capability. What do you do about that in the context of nuclear disarmament in the Middle East?

● (1720)

Mr. Paul Meyer: It's a good point to put in the broader context. Obviously—

Mr. Rick Norlock: Actually, it's a very narrow context.

Mr. Paul Meyer: Broader in a regional context, to the Middle East. Remember, Iraq and Libya had covert nuclear programs at one time. They were cheaters under the NPT. They were exposed and they were dealt with, Libya with some cooperation. Syria has still to justify a very suspicious facility that Israel took out unilaterally in 2007.

So it is important to recall that it's not just Iran that is pushing the envelope on responsible nuclear behaviour under the NPT, and that in turn is a function of the tensions that remain in the Middle East.

I mentioned the NPT. I think it's important to work through that.

One of the decisions of that review conference in 2010 was that this year there should be a conference of all Middle Eastern states to talk about the possibility of a nuclear WMD-free zone in the Middle East. There is a facilitator, a Finnish diplomat, and Finland has offered to host this conference. The calendar is moving. It's supposed to be in Helsinki before the end of the year. It's one in which he's on constant shuttle diplomacy, trying to encourage all the concerned countries to show up. I hope very much that they do, and I think it would be, of course, very embarrassing if either Israel or Iran was the only one not to show up. I think there has to be continued pressure for responsible behaviour.

I mentioned the CTBT a moment ago.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Sorry, what are those acronyms?

Mr. Paul Meyer: I apologize. It's a professional *déformation*.

It's the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the nuclear test ban. It's a very important accomplishment, yet not fully in force because of eight states. Three of those states—Israel, Iran, and Egypt—have all signed that treaty, but have not ratified it. It needs ratification to bring it forward.

A great conference-building measure would be to get those states to take a coordinated step for ratification.

Again, I think there are areas where well-intentioned outsiders—and I put Canada in that capacity—can encourage the states of that region to be more responsible, to help them overcome some of their own mistrust, as well as to support the legitimate international organization dedicated to ensuring compliance with the NPT and safeguard agreements of the IAEA.

That's the kind of approach to the Middle East that I would support.

Mr. Rick Norlock: I think some of that is happening, and Canada supports that, but Canada also says that if you're going to have a dance, you need partners, and right now we don't necessarily have those partners, if you assume that Iran does have a burgeoning nuclear capability.

How many minutes?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): I don't think you have time for another question. You're already two minutes over time.

Thank you for that final comment, Mr. Norlock.

I see we're getting fairly close to our closing time, and rather than trying another round or dividing up the two minutes that are there, I may exercise the chair's prerogative and ask a question of my own.

We've heard about the responsibility to protect, and we've had witnesses before our committee talking about Libya, and you mentioned it here today, Ms. Mason.

I wonder if each of you could give us your views on the concept of responsibility while protecting, which is a new notion presented by the Government of Brazil to the UN Secretary-General in November of 2011 in the aftermath of the Libyan mission, calling for the international community to adhere to fundamental principles, parameters, and procedures when exercising the responsibility to protect. I think that's a new development and a nuance on top of the responsibility to protect doctrine. Would either or both of you have comments on that?

● (1725)

Mr. Paul Meyer: I think it's of course incumbent on all member states that are contributing to a mission that they conduct themselves in accordance with international legal obligations, including human rights and humanitarian law. It's then necessary, since they always remain under national command, for those national commands to ensure discipline of their personnel, and if anyone is indeed guilty of violations of legal requirements, they are held to account and appropriately disciplined.

I think there have been various statements from the UN recognizing, in the past, that they have had members of UN-authorized missions and mandated missions who have committed criminal acts, therefore the importance of ensuring, for the reputation and future acceptability of UN missions, that the high standards are maintained.

I don't think it's a revelation by Brazil pointing out that there have been difficulties, but I think, at least in terms of its policies, the UN has largely responded to that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): You don't think it has anything to do with concerns about mission creep or changes in mission and the confusion of different states?

Mr. Paul Meyer: Personally, I haven't seen the Brazilian text, but my understanding is that to protect while undertaking a mission is a recognition that there is an obligation, obviously, to comply with international and humanitarian law, which limits collateral damage, so-called, and such.

Again, without seeing the specifics, I would just want to say that in terms of awareness of that responsibility, on behalf of the UN, I think it's fairly well developed.

Ms. Peggy Mason: Perhaps I could just add a couple of comments.

I did have the occasion to hear the Brazilian diplomatic representative make representations to another committee on this, and I think there was also this element, which arises out of the Libya discussion, about whether or not the mandate was strictly adhered to. Of course Paul Meyer has already talked about the fact that Russia and China both had concerns about whether or not the mandate turned into regime change when it clearly was not supposed to be regime change.

I think there is an area, again, where a divided leadership can make it easier to make this kind of argument, or can generate fears in this direction. If it's clearly a UN mandate and a UN command, and it's oversight by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and strategic oversight by the Security Council, one would hope it would be harder to make the argument about the mandate. It's the Security Council's responsibility, in its strategic oversight, to make sure the UN is not straying from its mandate. So that's an area where I think there would be an advantage again, where you don't have this divided leadership.

There's another aspect I'd like to bring in as well, because this is an area where Canada—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Please do it very quickly because we're running out of time.

Ms. Peggy Mason: The goal of protecting civilians under imminent threat in the context of a mission is part of many of the mandates of UN missions now, and it's a very challenging area for the military to deal with. It's not combat operations: it's something entirely different, and doctrine has not kept up with this. That's an area where Canada could make a contribution, along with other like-minded.... How do you organize yourself, and what do you do in order to actually protect civilians? What are some principles we can develop here? The UN has gone some way down this road, but I think it would really benefit by NATO members engaging in that doctrinal development.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): Thank you very much.

On that note, we'll have to end.

Thank you very much, Ms. Mason and Mr. Meyer, for your presentations and your presence. It's been very enlightening. They are very complex topics to handle in a short period of time like this.

I believe you both have papers. If you could leave a copy with us, we'll have them translated and shared.

I would entertain a motion to adjourn.

An hon. member: I so move.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jack Harris): The meeting is adjourned.

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